

Midwest Natural Resources Group

Fiscal Year 1999 Annual Report Region 3



Description and Mission

The Midwest Natural Resources Group was formed in 1998 and became officially chartered on June 23, 1999. The Group continues to focus on the health and vitality of natural resources in the Midwest. The group consists of senior agency executives from 14 federal agencies with responsibility and authority throughout the Midwest. Regional Director William Hartwig is the Service representative and current Chair of the Group.

The Group was created after executives from the agencies realized a need for a forum to discuss common conservation issues. While many issues are dealt with on an inter-agency basis by agency staff, the Midwest Natural Resources Group is unique in that it is comprised of regional executives who have the authority to focus their agency's respective resources onto specific areas. For Region 3, the Group represents a source of multi-agency support and coordination for each of the Region's ecosystems. Ecosystem team leaders can use the Group to help build support for their team's goals.

The Group's membership includes regional executives of:

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| ■ Bureau of Indian Affairs | ■ Office of Surface Mining |
| ■ Bureau of Land Management | ■ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| ■ Department of Energy | ■ U.S. Coast Guard |
| ■ Federal Highway Administration | ■ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| ■ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | ■ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| ■ National Park Service | ■ U.S. Forest Service |
| ■ Natural Resources Conservation Service | ■ U.S. Geological Survey |

The mission of the Group is to provide an opportunity for federal agencies to:

- Coordinate, identify, and enhance the accomplishments of existing efforts being undertaken by federal and non-federal partners.
- Explore, and commit to, new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

- Achieve better reporting procedures to Congress and the public regarding federal progress and results within the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).
 - Better utilize limited resources to reap maximum benefits for the natural resources and people of the Midwest.
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Summary of Fiscal Year 1999 Accomplishments

In order to facilitate its specific, on-the-ground, objectives, the Group decided to concentrate its efforts on 13 Midwest “focus areas,” each of which fall within either the Great Lakes or Big Rivers basin. Focus areas within the Big Rivers basin are the Illinois River, Minnesota River, Missouri River, Ohio River, Ozark Plateau, St. Croix River and Upper Mississippi River. Focus areas within the Great Lakes basin are the Detroit River/St. Clair River, Fox River/Green Bay, Great Lakes (general), Saginaw River and Bay, Southern Lake Erie and Southern Lake Michigan.

In Fiscal year 1999, the Group met three times to discuss issues that affect all or part of the member agencies. Topics such as GPRA (Government Performance and Results Act) resource issues and projects or initiatives of each member agency are discussed with the goal of combining efforts where possible, and eliminating unnecessary duplication.

Additionally, more than 100 staff members from the Group’s member agencies met as a general group, as well as within the specific focus areas they participate in, to discuss issues and projects at a staff level. At the end of this meeting, each focus area reported their progress and discussed any issues they had with the senior agency leaders. This unique feature of the Group allows members from all agencies, executives and staff, to gain a clear and concise understanding of current issues and efforts within the Midwest.

Goals for Fiscal Year 2000

The Midwest Natural Resources Group will advocate excellence in federal activities to support economic and natural resource vitality in the Midwest. The Group's key goals are:

- To report cooperative accomplishments in order to bring an understanding and awareness to the high economic, environmental and cultural value and needs of the Midwest.
- To focus on the fluid change and sustainability of natural resources, particularly in relation to continued economic development and urban growth.
- To garner federal focus and fiscal support toward the enhancement of these resources.

The Group aims to achieve its goals through ensuring that processes are developed, resources are identified and coordinated between agencies and partners, opportunities are sought for collaboration and communication, and timely assistance is provided, where needed, for the benefit of the American public in the metropolitan areas, communities, towns and farms of the Midwest.